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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3885
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0404
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 0891
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY MANAMA 0679
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 0410
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 0539
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 1956
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA 0642
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1192
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 1030
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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, OES, IIP/SEG - Bochner
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TAGS: [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN EARTH DAY 2008 PROGRAMMING ENGAGES YOUTH, MEDIA,
NGOS, SCIENTISTS, AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

REF: STATE 27697

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. NOT FOR INTERNET DISTRIBUTION.
11. (SBU) Summary: Embassy Amman organized three successful events for Earth Day 2008: a high-profile April 19 beach and dive clean-up in Aqaba; speaking engagements by Dr. Brenda Ekwurzel, a renowned speaker on environmental issues from the Union of Concerned Scientists; and a regional MEPI-funded course on institutional strengthening for environmental agencies from ten countries in the region. All the events garnered positive media coverage and supported our efforts to increase environmental awareness in Jordan. End summary.

Aqaba Beach Clean-Up Nets Half Ton of Garbage

12. (SBU) Jordan's southern shoreline is littered with all kinds of rubbish, from cigarette butts and plastic bags to diapers and charcoal, materials that often find their way into the Red Sea. ESTH and the USAID Water and Environment Resources Office (WRE) in cooperation with the Jordan Marine Conservation Society (JREDS), the Ministry of Environment, and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) organized an April 19 clean-up campaign at the Aqaba Marine Park, a protected marine area along Jordan's 27-kilometer coastline.

13. (U) Event participants included Princess Basma Ali, the Chairperson of the JREDS Board; Minister of Environment Khaled Irani; and ASEZA officials including Environment Commissioner Bilal Bashir. JREDS also organized the participation of more than 200 school students, leading private sector representatives, and other Aqaba community representatives. Forty members of the Embassy community, including family members, volunteered to participate in this event which included a beach clean-up as well as a dive clean-up. USAID/WRE also set up booths to showcase its water and environmental conservation projects and funded t-shirts with the logos of the partnering organizations, as well as water, gloves, and hats to support the clean-up efforts. According to JREDS, the dive

recovered fishermen's nets, soda cans, as well as plastic cups and bags - in total, more than a half-ton of garbage.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The Aqaba clean-up garnered significant positive media coverage, a positive step toward enhancing environmental awareness, one of the biggest challenges in the Middle East, including Jordan. End Comment.

American Scientist Discusses Climate Change Impacts

¶5. (U) In conjunction with Earth Day, the Public Affairs section and ESTH Hub organized the visit of speaker Dr. Brenda Ekwurzel, currently working on the national climate program at the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). Dr. Ekwurzel spoke about climate change impacts, challenges, and proposed solutions with graduate students at the Princess Sumaya University for Technology (PSUT) and students at Al-Hashimiyah University (HU). She gave a speech at a "Women in Science" conference that took place at the Jordan University for Science and Technology (JUST) on April 29. Dr. Ekwurzel also held a roundtable discussion with representatives from various environmental NGOs in Jordan, and media representatives.

¶6. (U) Ekwurzel's meetings with government officials included the Minister of Environment and officials at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation. Her interlocutors were appreciative of the useful information she shared. By sticking to scientific evidence and not taking any political bait offered by media and university representatives, Dr. Ekwurzel remained a credible speaker throughout her program.

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Regional Institutional Strengthening Course

¶7. (U) ESTH, in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Jordanian Ministry of Environment, organized the May 5-7 institutional strengthening course funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and led by senior EPA trainers. The Ambassador and Minister Irani opened the three-day course. The regional course was attended by 25 senior officials representing various environmental agencies from ten countries in the MENA region.

¶8. (U) Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, and Morocco shared their experiences with restructuring their environmental agencies which engendered lively discussions and information exchange. Participants were impressed by Jordan's Environmental Rangers' structure and their responsibility for enforcing Jordan's environmental laws. Senior EPA managers leading the workshop shared some of recent EPA innovations to tie many disparate environmental information sources together to create a coherent vision, mission, and plans aligned with organizational objectives and resources. EPA also shared its Region III innovations using logic maps based on scientific input. The innovative methodology was very well received, and several countries (most notably Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia) could well request USG assistance to implement such a methodology. The workshop ended on a lively note with a discussion on establishing an Arab-region enforcement notification and tracking network.

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